

(Nānā, karaṇa) Puggala Sutta 2

The Second Discourse on (Different) Individuals

[Becoming a non-returned through dhyana]

(Aṅguttara Nikāya 4.124/2:128)

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2008

Introduction

There are two (Nānā, karaṇa) Puggala Suttas (A 4.123-124), consecutively preserved in the Catukka Nipāta (the Book of Fours) of the Aṅguttara Nikāya.¹ The first Sutta (A 4.123) states that even heavenly beings are reborn in the hells, except for those who are saints of the path. The second (A 4.124, here) relates how the practice of the form dhyanas² can lead to non-return.

The Commentator Anuruddha (12th century) states in his famous Abhidhamma digest, **the Abhidhamm’attha, saṅgaha** (Abhs), that

*Puthujjanā na labbhanti
suddh’āvāsesu sabbatthā |
sotāpannā ca sakadāgāmino
cā pi puggalā |
ariyā n’opalabbhanti
asaññ’āpāyam, bhūmisu |
sesa-ṭṭhānesu labbhanti
ariyānariyā pi ca ||*

Worldlings are not found
in any of the the Pure Abodes at all,
nor individuals who are streamwinners
or once-returned.
Noble saints are not found
in the unconscious world nor in the states of misery.
In the other places are found
both the nobles and the ignoble ones.

(Abhs 5.13-14/22 = Abhs:WG 165 f)

As stated in the (Nānā, karaṇa) Puggala Sutta 1 (A 4.12), only non-returned inhabit the 4th-dhyana world known as **Suddh’āvāsa** or “Pure Abodes” are a group of five of the highest form heavens populated only by non-returned, and where they attain arhathood and nirvana.³ There are these five realms in the Pure Abodes, reborn there *according to the predominance of their spiritual faculty*, thus:

Peerless devas	(<i>akaniṭṭha</i>)	16,000 aeons	wisdom faculty
Clear-visioned devas	(<i>sudassī</i>)	8,000 aeons	concentration faculty
Beautifully-visible devas	(<i>sudassa</i>)	4,000 aeons	mindfulness faculty
Untroubled devas	(<i>atappa</i>)	2,000 aeons	effort faculty
Non-declining devas	(<i>aviha</i>)	1,000 aeons	faith faculty

Although only non-returned reborn into these five realms, there is no fixed law that they are reborn *only* there. According to the Abhidhamma tradition, only non-returned who have cultivated the fifth dhyana (that is, the fourth dhyana of the Sutta tradition)⁴ are reborn there, but non-returned with a lower dhyana-attainment are reborn elsewhere in the form sphere. All non-returned are reborn *only* in the form sphere because they have eradicated sensual desire (*kāma, rāga*), the mental fetter that limits rebirth to the sense-sphere.⁵

¹ A 4.123-124/2:126-128 = SD 23.8a+8b.

² On *dhyana* (*jhāna*), see *Bhāvanā* = SD 15.1(8) & *Nimitta* = SD 19.7.

³ See **Is Rebirth Immediate?** = SD 2.17(4.4+5).

⁴ Rupert Gettin, in his *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, notes: “Another example of a common innovation is the Abhidhamma system of five *jhānas* as opposed to the Suttanta system of four. The additional *jhāna* is achieved by distinguishing between *jhāna* that has both *vicāra* and *vitāka*, and *jhāna* that has only *vicāra*; the latter kind of *jhāna* corresponds to what is called the *dhyānāntara* to Sarvāstivādin Abhidharma literature, though *avitakko vicāra-matto samādhi* is distinguished at [S 43.12/4:363,4-6].” (2001:14 n59). See Abhs:B 218. Effectively, the 5th dhyana of the Abhidhamma is the same as the 4th dhyana of the Suttas.

⁵ See Abhs 5.85-87/26 f = Abhs:WG 200 f; Abhs:B 218 f.

The Second Discourse on (Different) Individuals

(A 4.124/2:128)

1 Bhikshus, there are these four kinds of individuals existing in the world. What are the four?

2 (1) FROM 1ST-DHYANA TO NON-RETURN. Here, bhikshus, a certain individual, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome mental states, attains and dwells in **the first dhyana**, accompanied by initial application and sustained application, accompanied by zest and happiness, born of solitude.⁶

Therein, whatever there is,
by way of form,
by way of feeling,
by way of perception,
by way of formations,
by way of consciousness,

he regards these states as impermanent, as suffering [unsatisfactory], as a disease, as a tumour, as a dart, as a calamity, as an affliction, as alien, as disintegrating, as void, as not self.⁷

After death, with the breaking up of the body, he is reborn in the company of the devas of the Pure Abodes [Suddh'āvāsa].⁸

Bhikshus, this rebirth is not common with the worldlings.⁹

3 (2) FROM 2ND-DHYANA TO NON-RETURN. Furthermore, bhikshus, here, a certain individual, with the stilling of initial application and sustained application, by gaining inner tranquillity and oneness of mind, he attains and dwells in **the second dhyana**, free from initial application and sustained application, accompanied by zest and happiness born of concentration.

Therein, whatever there is,
by way of form,
by way of feeling,
by way of perception,
by way of formations,
by way of consciousness,

he regards these states as impermanent, as suffering [unsatisfactory], as a disease, as a tumour, as a dart, as a calamity, as an affliction, as alien, as disintegrating, as void, as not self.

After death, with the breaking up of the body, he is reborn in the company of the devas of the Pure Abodes [Suddh'āvāsa].

Bhikshus, this rebirth is not common with the worldlings.

4 (3) FROM 3RD-DHYANA TO NON-RETURN. Furthermore, bhikshus, here, a certain individual, with the fading away of zest, he remains equanimous, mindful and clearly knowing, and experiences happiness with the body. He attains and dwells in **the third dhyana**, of which the noble ones declare, 'Happily he dwells in equanimity and mindfulness.'

Therein, whatever there is,

⁶ These are the dhyana factors: *vitakka vicāra pīti sukhasa ek'aggatā*, respectively. On the omission of "one-pointedness of mind" (*cittassa ek'aggatā*) and "concentration" (*samādhi*) here, see **The layman and dhyana** = SD 8.5.

⁷ *Te dhamme aniccato dukkhato rogato gaṇḍato sallato aghato ābādhato parato palokato suññato anattato samanupassati*. This "insight reflection" is also found in **Mahā Māluṅkya,putta S** (M 64.9/1:435) = SD 23.10 in the same context. In **Jhāna S** (A 9.36/4:422-426) = SD 33.8, its context is broader, incl both form dhyanas and formless attainments. The phrase without *dhamme* is very common: **Dīgha,nakha S** (M 74.9/1:500) = SD 16.1 (in connection with the primary elements, *dhātu*); **Sīlavanta S** (S 22.122/3:167 f) = SD 47.5; **Sutavā S** (S 22.123/3:168 x 2 = SD 47.6); (**Nānā,kaṛaṇa**) **Mettā S 2** (A 4.126/2:130) = SD 33.10.

⁸ That is, he becomes a non-returner.

⁹ *Ayaṃ bhikkhave upapatti asādhāraṇā puthujjanehi*.

by way of form,
by way of feeling,
by way of perception,
by way of formations,
by way of consciousness,

he regards these states as impermanent, as suffering [unsatisfactory], as a disease, as a tumour, as a dart, as a calamity, as an affliction, as alien, as disintegrating, as void, as not self.

After death, with the breaking up of the body, he is reborn in the company of the devas of the Pure Abodes [Suddh'āvāsa].

Bhikshus, this rebirth is not common with the worldlings.

5 (4) FROM 4TH-DHYANA TO NON-RETURN. Furthermore, bhikshus, here, , a certain individual, with the abandoning of pleasure and pain—and with the earlier disappearance of happiness and displeasure—he attains and dwells in **the fourth dhyana**, that is neither painful nor pleasant, and with mindfulness fully purified by equanimity.

Therein, whatever there is,

by way of form,
by way of feeling,
by way of perception,
by way of formations,
by way of consciousness,

he regards these states as impermanent, as suffering [unsatisfactory], as a disease, as a tumour, as a dart, as a calamity, as an affliction, as alien, as disintegrating, as void, as not self.

After death, with the breaking up of the body, he is reborn in the company of the devas of the Pure Abodes [Suddh'āvāsa].

Bhikshus, this rebirth is not common with the worldlings.

6 Bhikshus, these are the four kinds of individuals existing in the world.

— evaṃ —

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